

Wisconsin Sharptail Grouse Status 2005

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Abstract

The total number of dancing males on the 9 managed tracts in Wisconsin decreased from 148 in 2004 to 114 this year, indicating a 23% decline in the sharptail population since last year. The overall population has been on a gradual decline that started in 1999 (Figure 2). Survey efforts by the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society in unmanaged habitats resulted in locating less sharptails in 2005, with a total of 215 birds found this spring compared to 243 last year.

Methods

Sharptail populations on managed properties were monitored by counting displaying males on dancing grounds. Male birds were identified by observations from blinds placed on dancing grounds with the aid of field glasses after approaching the dancing ground afoot or by vehicle. Complete census of display grounds was attempted on those properties designated as sharptail management tracts (Figure 1).

Sharptail surveys on private lands generally involved selecting one or more blocks of the best available habitat and then conducting listening routes along roads transecting those blocks. Those dancing grounds found within wildland habitat blocks were approached and all birds flushed from each site were counted, no attempt being made to distinguish sexes. Sharptail surveys on unmanaged lands were concentrated within a portion of northwestern Wisconsin, primarily in deer management units 2 and 9 (Figure 1).

These surveys are a cooperative effort between DNR, USFS, GLIFWC, Northland College, members of the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society, and volunteers.

Results

The 2005 dancing ground survey indicated a slight decrease in sharptail numbers on all managed sites, contributing to an overall decrease of 23% in comparison to 2004 counts (Table 1). Dancing male counts decreased on seven of the nine managed lands. Since the survey on Kimberly Clark Wildlife Area was not conducted in 2004, there was no number to compare the survey data to. One survey, the Wood County W.A. was not completed this year.

Replicates of these traditionally surveyed areas are the most dependable index to changes in the sharptail grouse population.

Survey efforts by members of the Wisconsin Sharp-tailed Grouse Society resulted in a count of 215 birds in deer management units 2 and 9. This count was 12% lower than that obtained during a similar survey operation conducted in 2004.

Table 1. Sharptail Population Trends on Managed Lands.

| Number of Dancing Males on Sharptail Grouse Mangement Areas from 1991-2005 | | | | | | | | | | | | | | | |
|--|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|------------|
| Property | 1991 | 1992 | 1993 | 1994 | 1995 | 1996 | 1997 | 1998 | 1999 | 2000 | 2001 | 2002 | 2003 | 2004 | 2005 |
| Crex Meadows W.A. | 126 | 47 | 53 | 59 | 83 | 110 | 117 | 132 | 111 | 110* | 73* | 61 | 61 | 53 | 49 |
| Douglas County W.A. | 5 | 4 | 2 | 8 | 12 | 9 | 9 | 18 | 20 | 16 | 11 | 12 | 20 | 21 | 14 |
| Kimberly Clark W.A. | 56 | 32 | 20 | 20 | 28 | 20 | 15 | 25 | 40 | 39 | 5 | 9 | 4 | n/a | 0 |
| Moquah Barrens W.M.A. | 6 | 9 | 6 | 7 | 21 | 14 | 17 | 34 | 40 | 36 | 19 | 35 | 29 | 14 | 7 |
| Namekagon Barrens W.A. | 28 | 25 | 16 | 25 | 39 | 44 | 54 | 65 | 43 | 24 | 9 | 21 | 42 | 25 | 19 |
| Pershing W.A. | 37 | 34 | 24 | 16 | 26 | 30 | 43 | 34 | 22 | ** | 19 | 13 | 3 | 16 | 11 |
| Riley Lake W.M.A. | 25 | 8 | 5 | 7 | 18 | 17 | 19 | 19 | 27 | 27 | 17 | 12 | 17 | 16 | 12 |
| Wood County W.A. | 54 | 13 | 11 | 16 | 19 | 18 | 10 | 17 | 18 | 6 | 0 | 8 | n/a | n/a | n/a |
| Dike Seventeen | 16 | 10 | 9 | 9 | 8 | 7 | 3 | 18 | 3 | 6 | 0 | 2 | 2 | 3 | 2 |
| Total | 353 | 182 | 146 | 167 | 254 | 269 | 287 | 362 | 325 | 284 | 159 | 173 | 178 | 148 | 114 |

*Not a complete count of dancing males.

**A few dancing males were present.

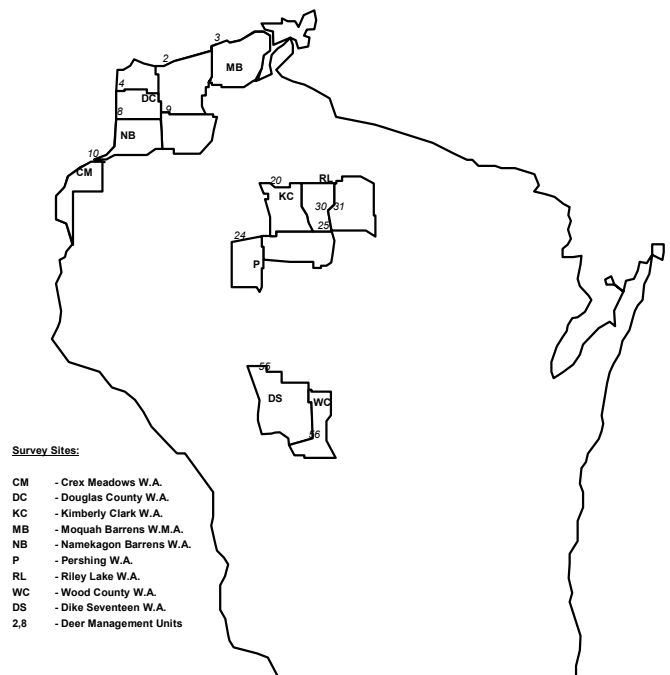


Figure 1. Sharptail survey area, 2005.

Figure 2. Number of Dancing Males on Sharptail Grouse Mangement Areas from 1991-2005

